

SPECIAL
WORLD
SCIENCE
FICTION
CONVENTION
REPORT

THRAUST

SCIENCE FICTION

THE
MAGAZINE
OF
THE
FUTURE

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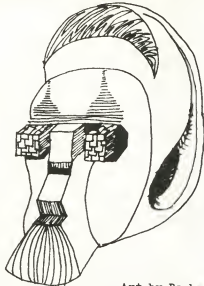
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EDITORIAL



Art by Barbara Goldfarb

The World Science Fiction Convention held in Washington D.C. this past Labor Day was the largest in history--as is usual with these sort of things. The membership total went well over 4000. It is a very heartening thing to see that science fiction is gaining in popularity among the masses like this but it is a sad thing to see the end of the science fiction convention as we know it today. To illustrate what I am talking about, take a look at the yearly Star Trek Convention in New York City. Attendance at those events is around the 10,000 mark. You cannot even move or see anything in a crowd like that. All possibility of meeting people and actually being able to sit down and talk is impossible. There is the added problem in that there are getting to be fewer and fewer hotels that can handle such large numbers of fans. Only places in cities like Miami Beach or Atlantic City will soon have convention facilities large enough to handle the mass.

Right now the Worldcon is run by fans and is geared towards them with the profit motive not too highly regarded. The event is once a year to have fun and meet the people who create our favorite form of entertainment. But at the rate this is going, professional organizers will be needed soon to coordinate the events meaning that high profits will become the prime consideration in staging such an event. The spontaneity of a Worldcon will be lost. The fanishness that separates our type of madness from all the other types of conventions in the world will be lost. That should not be allowed to happen.

I can visualize only three possible solutions to this problem. The first is to limit the membership of Worldcons to a reasonable number, a method that just cannot be imposed. The second solution is to go ahead and attempt to rent a major auditorium in a major city and have professional or semi-professional fans help organize it. The third solution that I feel may be the best in the long run is to do what the Science Fiction Writers of America do each year--have two or three locations for the Worldcon in several sections of the country. Once the convention reaches the 10,000 member mark, I can see no reason why duplicate conventions cannot be run on the east and west coasts. Hugos can be awarded simultaneously with the awards being presented in the area where the award winning writers are in attendance. This will preserve the Worldcon at a level where it would be possible to talk to people and yet keep the convention open to newcomers.

A second thought about changes in the Worldcon format for the future concerns panels. At the current convention it was felt necessary that a theme for the convention be made so two were conceived: Outer Space and Inner Space. Two speeches finished these topics. The rest of the programming

consisted of the usual Worldcon fare - editor panels, artist panels, political panels, a few name pros' egotripping, a guest of honor speech, a panel on women in sf, sf in academia, predictions of the future, etc. Looking at the attendance at these events I estimate that around 1000 fans were in the room at all times. This leaves the other 3000 fans wandering around somewhere. I thought that Worldcons were a place to hear writers speak and share their thoughts with the fans. Apparently the majority of the convention members think that the panels fail to achieve this.

These conventions may be one way to establish a serious series of discussions at a convention that may interest older convention attendees who have grown tired of the same old fare. Another method may be to try and break away from the tight timing of events used now at the cons and arrange to round up some explosive speakers like Asimov or Ellison and let them fight with the audience for an extended period of time. A third method that may work with the keeping in mind of the growth of the convention may be to have simultaneous events in smaller rooms so that people who have pros that they would especially like to meet may hear them in relative quiet with the greater possibility of actually having an opportunity to speak to them.

By the way, welcome to our second anniversary issue of THRUST SCIENCE FICTION. There have been some changes around here since last year and this is as good a time as any to introduce myself. I am the new editor of THRUST, Steven L. Goldstein. I have been with the magazine from the beginning and have been a science fiction fan since I could read. So much for my credentials. Our former editor and creator of THRUST, D. Douglas Pratz, is still with us but is too busy to produce the magazine any longer. Thus, the delay in getting this issue printed. Under my management there will be some changes. The price is one change over which, unfortunately, we have no control. Paper prices are going up as are our printer costs. Believe it or not, we design this magazine to break even. It isn't easy and we need your help to continue this. We cannot afford to pay for contributions but if you are an up and coming writer or artist we welcome your work. Do you have any suggestions to make to us? Write. We would like to start up a letter column. This is your magazine and we need to know what you like or don't like about it--book reviews, interviews (we have on hand articles by Asimov, Gerrold, and Mr Ellison), stories, art, articles, or whatever. Plus it is nice to know that someone out there is reading this. For every letter published or contribution used the originator will receive one free copy of the magazine.

One policy change that we have been thinking of for some time has been to open THRUST up to fantasy contributions. With the increase in interest in the occult and fantasy in general, we first thought only to add more material to THRUST but then we began thinking that perhaps the fantasy fan and the science fiction fan might not be the same. Therefore coming in about a month will be a new companion magazine to THRUST - COUNTERTHRUST, THE MAGAZINE OF THE FANTASTIC. The layout of COUNTERTHRUST will be similar to that of THRUST - only the material will concern only fantasy matters. It is an experiment and we will determine if it will become a permanent addition to Thrust Publications. See the back cover of this issue for details. The editors will be myself and William Pink. If you have something creeping in your attic, send it in. We need new writers and artists. This is your new chance to get into print.

This issue of THRUST is obviously dedicated to coverage of the WORLD SCIENCE FICTION convention held in Washington D.C. and we would like to thank the following people for their aid in making this issue possible: William Pink, Robert Schwler, D. Douglas Pratz, Ted Manekin, Rich Weinstein, Natalie Paymer, Felipe Alfonso, Dave Bishoff, Chris Lampton, Judy Goldstein, and a cast of thousands. The next issue will be a special Harlan Ellison appreciation issue. Watch for it around next February.



SPECIAL WORLDCON REPORT WORLDCON AT A GLANCE

by D. Douglas Fratz

Discon 2, the 32nd World Science Fiction Convention and the largest sf convention ever was held over the Labor Day weekend this year at the Sheraton Park Hotel in Washington D.C. Official attendance at the convention was 4500, occupying 1400 rooms in the Sheraton Park and Shoreham Hotels. Registration covered 44 states and 12 foreign countries. The four days of programming included panel discussions, speeches, awards ceremonies, films, parties, and even a costume contest. The World Science Fiction Convention has been an annual event since 1939 (except 1942-1945), twenty-seven of which have been in the U.S., with two in London, two in Toronto, and one in Heidelberg, Germany. Next year's con will be in Melbourne, Australia.

The convention started Thursday night with the traditional parties, many by groups bidding for the right to hold future worldcons in their cities, and the film show that was an almost constant feature of the five day affair. The show included cartoons, serials, and dozens of other films, new and old, as well as the usual expected group of science fiction films.

The official opening was saved until Friday afternoon, and the long afternoon of programming began. After interesting speeches by Captain Robert P. Freitas of NASA about the future of space exploration, and by Frederik Pohl about the future of life on Earth. Isaac Asimov and Harlan Ellison took the spotlight to hold a "dialog". In case you don't know what these two deans of sf are like when together with an audience of a few thousand (or even less) - sf fans, what they did was insult each other for an hour or two. All in good humor, of course. And with many interesting stories about themselves thrown in. A slide show by fan guest-of-honor and long time demonstrator-photographer, Jay Kay Klein, was then shown with some technical difficulties featuring motley slides, old and new, of various sf personalities at the con. A "Meet the Pros" party finished the afternoon, with dozens of professional science fiction writers and artists, all in funny hats for identification, stood around and talked and drank with hundreds of fans.

The evening festivities opened with a musical comedy written by local long-time sf fan Alexis Gilliland and performed by the members of the Washington Science Fiction Association called 2001: A Space Op-



Guest-of-Honor, Roger Zelazny © 1974 by Ted Manekin

era. It was a zany take-off on the movie, and the music was taken from various well-known musicals. The players did a superb job. Projector problems postponed the scheduled showing of Harlan Ellison's new movie, "A Boy and His Dog", and the evening's program ended with dramatic readings by Harlan and Roger Zelazny from their own works.

Saturday saw Andrew Offutt (Andy always uses small letters in his name) give a "serious" talk on his philosophy of life, in which he managed to sound like an intelligent and reserved small midwestern town unitarian minister. The three panel discussions were on women in science fiction, science fiction artists and a look towards the Orwellian 1984, and how we're getting there.

The final afternoon feature was the Guest-of-Honor speech by Roger Zelazny, well-known science fiction writer living in Baltimore. Roger told of his slow rise as a writer, and all the trials and tribulations involved in becoming one of the most respected of modern sf writers.

Saturday night, The Marguerite and costume judging was held. More than one hundred fans wore costumes of their own design of various characters in science fiction and fantasy literature and film. The costumes were incredible in their variety and beauty. Among the winners were renditions of the Holka (by Gordon R. Dickson and Poul Anderson) and the Dorsai (by Gordie again).

Afterwards, Harlan Ellison finally showed his long-awaited film, "A Boy and His Dog". This unreleased film was shown from the work print, in ten minute segments, with Harlan and producer/actor Alvie Moore answering questions between segments. Although this wasn't really an ideal way to see a film, few went away unimpressed by the excellence of the production. However, the film's concept and shock ending may well make it very hard to release.

On Sunday, the members of the convention voted Kansas City as the site for the 1976 Worldcon, defeating the attempts of Columbus and New Orleans. The numerous panel discussions included teaching sf writing, the energy crisis, science fiction anthologies, the new interest in sf by the academic community and the plight of sf magazines. And Sunday night was the Hugo Awards Banquet. The awards, which have been given since 1953 (except 1954), represent the science fiction fans' choice of the best works in sf each year.

Monday was filled with more panels, one on sf fans, one on sf movies, one on sf predictions, one on war in the future. Also there was the final art-show bid-off, where much of the art featured in the art display room was sold. By the time the closing ceremonies came, there was many a tired fan ready to head for home to wait another year.

Words cannot adequately describe what pandemonium really occurs when thousands of sf fans, ages 16 to 60, gather in one large hotel for a long weekend. You have to have been there.

WORLDCON FROM THE OUTSIDE

by Steven L. Goldstein

The World Science Fiction Convention is a yearly event that takes place in a different city each year. Choice of location is determined by the membership of the previous conventions and by a rotation plan which moves the site from the western states to the central states and then to the east with other countries eligible to participate in any year. The convention began around 1939 with an attendance of only 100 or so. In recent years the growth of the convention has been astronomical. A Worldcon is a place to meet one's favorite authors and weird people in general (such as the ones pictured on the following pages). Just be sure to bring along lots of No-doz.

I arrived at DISCON II Friday evening after working all day at analyzing raw sewage and driving in a cloudburst. That was the quiet part of the week-end.

As I entered the hotel (Sheraton-Park) with my wife I could feel a sort of electric charge of potential energy soaring through the air. This was the place. The lobby was full of fans, some of which I had met at previous conventions. I found some of the THRUST people in one corner of the lobby listening to Isaac Asimov and Lester del Rey. I ran to meet them with tape recorder in hand. Asimov promised us an interview later during the convention. All we had to do, he said, was push a pretty woman at him to catch his attention.

Meanwhile, we had to find someone to bum a room off of the first night of the convention--newlyweds are not too wealthy. Lucky for us another couple had just checked into the overflow hotel in the Shoreham and they had two double beds in the room. The price was right. I had a quick run to the car to collect my supply of THRUST back issues (issues 3 through 5 are available from us at 35¢ a piece) I was going to push on an unsuspecting public.

I got the idea that the Shoreham was not too thrilled with the convention when I found that our room was somewhere over the rainbow. Not only that but we had no air conditioning. Grump! Oh well, what can you expect for free?

We made it back to the main hotel among much greeting of old friends who I would not see again at this convention just in time for the main event of the evening: 2001: A Space Opera. 2001 was a play staged by the Washington Science Fiction Association and was written by Alexis Gilliland and Divers Hands (at least that is what it said in my book). It was a musical roughly based on Clarke's 2001 with corruptions of various songs like: Space Riders in the Sky and the Apes Go Marching On. The stars of the show were undoubtedly Ray Ridenour as an Uncle Tom HAL 9000 and the enigmatic space slab played by Alan Huff. A slide show during the equivalent of the trip to the moon was excellent as was the satire of the trip through warp space. The crowd which at this time was about 2000 strong was a very receptive audience. A strange audience. A large percentage of the crowd were college age but all age groups and life styles were represented. A few of the costumes worn by the female fans were real eye openers but no one seemed to notice anything out of the ordinary. Much.

The next program event was THE HARLAN ELLISON SHOW!!! Harlan Ellison, for those of you who have been in hiding for the last ten years, writes for television, the movies, has won about a dozen awards in science fiction and in the mystery field. He

is notorious for taking over and controlling every event he is in. He is also short. This event was to be the world premier of a movie based on an award winning story by Ellison called "A Boy and His Dog." The movie was a rough cut meaning that it was very choppy, the print was bad, the sound terrible, and the entire film on ten separate reels. It proved to be a long ordeal. Harlan began by introducing the film in his usual modest way--by praising it and the producers to the sky and then allowing us to see the first reel which was marred by an ailing film projector. Between reels he talked some more, showed us part of the second reel, and then stopped the action due to the projector dying. Telling us to stay put while the projectors were being fixed, he started talking---and talking---and talking. The first reel was begun again and the projector again failed to perform properly. He again began to talk and talk... To his credit it must be admitted that not very many people left the hall during all this time. They were all waiting to see him make a fool of himself. The first reel was shown yet again to no avail. Then Harlan, after two hours of this, said to try coming back in an hour and they would try to have the movie working.

That ended the day's official events since at midnight the projector was still not working and the movie was scheduled for the following evening. Harlan and Guest of Honor Roger Zelazny tried valiantly to cover up the program gap by reading from their works, but not very many people were willing to sit around for that. It was party time.

There was one thing that I discovered pretty quickly. The Sheraton-Park Hotel is not an easy place to find a party. The building is designed by a madman. Rooms have numbers like W773, R339, etc. The letters refer to sections of the hotel--some of which you can't get to from here. I had tried to get a list of parties down on my program book during the day from overheard conversations and messages placed on bulletin boards, but quickly became exhausted. The Friday night parties were either in Limbo or were in hiding. There were only three parties that I could find---one for the Kansas City in '76 bid, one for Aussiecon 74, and one for New York in 77. The Harlan Ellison show, as far as I had lasted so long without producing results that the party spirit had been lost. We wandered around with other people for a time, riding the elevators, watched some weird movies, and went to bed at the early hour of 1:20 in the sweatbox.

The next day the legal occupants of the hotel room we were occupying complained about the lack of air conditioning and we got the room that night for free. I guess the manager had gotten guilty feelings about what he was doing to us fans. We all went to the Sheraton Coffee Shop to celebrate which was our first mistake of the day. Yuck! Even corn flakes tasted like overcooked goat turds. Then we waited in line for the opening of the huckster room.

Lo! and behold! The Worldcon book room was a trip into Wonderland and Oz at the same time. The room was about the size of an indoor football stadium. It was a collector's dream. In one corner Ben Boye, Jack Gaughan, Joe Haldeman and others were autographing the new issue of Analog, in another corner people were playing a Star Trek game on computer, and everywhere else books were flying. I fumbled for my wallet but it was gone! My wife was determined to protect our life savings. A bit dazed by all this I wandered into the art show next door. Fantastic! With the exception of a hundred and three paintings of Mr. Spock and the Starship Enterprise, the art was truly great. I greedily set my eyes on paintings that I would attempt to procure during the auctions the next day.

I returned to the daily events in time to catch Keith Laumer spilling blood all over the spectators and Fred Pohl, Poul Anderson and Gordon Dickson. Then it was time to run to the movie room to catch an insane British comedy by Monty Python. The movie room was pretty crowded. It was said that around 1200 people were in it at all times. The movies were being shown almost continuously throughout the week-end. I suppose movies at conventions are a good thing. The crowd by this time had swelled to 3000

and it was getting to be standing room only in the building. The movie room was a good place to lose some people for a few hours.

At 4:00 Guest of Honor Roger Zelazny (a native Baltimorean and all around good guy) gave his speech in which he gave his life history as a writer and encouraged those of us in the audience who are aspiring writers (aren't we all?) to keep trying. He wished he could know which of us would make it out of the writing business so that he could personally welcome that person into the ranks of fan turned pro. Nice speech from a nice man.

During the intermission I gathered the club members together to make plans for a party of our own the following night. Then we piled into a car to go eat quickly so that we would be back early enough to get good seats at the main event--the masquerade ball. We needn't have rushed. We barely managed to get seats at the back of the ballroom among the 4000 fans tearing the place down. Off to the right of the stage was a photography set up so that pictures could be taken of contestants without flashes blinding everyone. We promptly banished two of our members to that area so that we could show you the best of the event and settled down for a real blast. The event began unexpectedly with the Alexandria Pipe and Drum Band in the best of Scottish tradition. Ever see people boogie in the aisles to bagpipes? It happened. Then came the costumes for an hour and a half. The show was a bit too long but worth it. The Judges' Choice and Most Beautiful/Best of Show award went to the couple on our cover, Mike and Carol Resnick portraying the Ice Demon and the White Sybil from a story by Clark Ashton Smith. They worked five months on their outfits and it was worth it. The bare breasted harpy was one of my favorites--along with Cohen the Barbarian. Many of the University of Maryland Militia people were there in their garb along with other dignitaries such as David Gerrold with eightbreasts Asimov was invited up to help with magic act one. One couple really were screwy--they portrayed a couple in Philip Jose Farmer's novel, *FLESH*. The woman wore a sheer piece of silk and the man a too short loin cloth. They won an award for Most Primal outfit (Tim and Morning G'Zell).

Then there were the belly dancers--one never got off to a good start after her bra started slipping. Slave girls were in evidence. One slightly out of context said that he would like the members happy next year and bring in a slave girl with grooved nipples. Aside from this one woman's libstatement, there was no evidence of resentment against the abundant display of flesh.

Paramount sent some people dressed as Apes to do a fight scene on stage in advertisement of their abominable television series. Aside from that, the only contestants who were really out of place were a couple of kids dressed in uniforms from Star Trek.

Other winners were: Best Sworn and Solecism, Ron and Judith Miller as Hadron of Hestor and Tavia of Tjanath (from Burroughs); Best Group, Richard Schreiber and Ann Layman Chancellor as Caterpillar and Butterfly from *Alice in Wonderland*; Best Group Presentation, Mark Keller, Mike Blake, Nancy Hussar, Gayle Kaplan, Lynne Brodsky, Paul di Filippo and Steve Ehrlich in Buckets of Gore or Albott and Costello Meet the Priest King (a satire of the novels by John Norman); Best Individual Presentation, David Wilson as an aging Merlin (excellent presentation); and last of all Most Humorous, Barry Parker as Sherlock Holms.

Following the main event came THE RETURN OF THE HARLAN ELLISON SHOW! The movie finally got off the ground and a very sleepy audience did get to see the film. A review of the movie may be found elsewhere in this issue but I just wish to state that the film would probably not be appreciated by a non science fiction oriented audience.

Finally we managed to see what was doing in the way of parties. There must have been 50 parties in the hotel that night. We plopped down in one place to wake up and guard a pile of peanuts. Then the word came--Star Trek Blooper and The Cage were to be shown. Run back down to the theatre. I am ashamed to admit that I fell asleep after the first

ten minutes of The Cage. Passed out more likely. Sunday morning. No roomates? They never got in. My head hurts. My tongue is fuzzy. The party is tonight. Must make signs - take asperin - get food - run to eat, yuck - go through huckster room again and get ready for the auction. Gonna buy a lot of stuff. Nah!

I saw that the auction was not going to be like the one I attended three years ago at Noreason when the University of Maryland at Catonsville Campus paid \$400 for a painting when the minimum bid was \$250. The prices were outrageous. The people there had no conception of value. Anything--even an ugly scribble would sell for a mint as long as it had the right name on it. Little name identification badges hand painted went for \$40. Good work, bad wages, it didn't matter. They paid and paid and paid like money was going out the door (is it?). I cried when I saw my chosen painting go for \$200. Wrendy Pini, you can contribute to THRUST any day. I just wish that these people would realize that years from now most of today's artists would be forgotten. The stuff was good but Dali it was not. Yeesh. Jack Chalker must have made a fortune for the convention with his auctioneering.

I attended a panel called the original anthology sweepstakes with Harlan Ellison, Jack Dann, Damon Knight, and Robert Silverberg. Much to Silverberg's credit, this was one panel that managed to keep itself on the subject in question. I sat near Geo. Effinger who was waiting a chance to sell a story to Harlan. After this the afternoon was a blur. I think I just spent most of the time preparing for our party. There are two ways to enjoy a con. Either run like mad trying to visit every party or throw one yourself and wait for people to find you. I think the latter method has some merit.

Oh yes, we did manage to conduct some interviews that afternoon by grabbing a pretty woman and shoving her into Asimov's face. We also cornered David (Trouble With Tribbles) Gerrold. Their interviews will appear in coming issues of THRUST.

That night was the Hugo Awards banquet. Let me digress for a moment to explain to those of you who are new at fandom what the Hugo is. The Hugo award is an award given each year to the best science fiction of the previous year and is voted on by the members of the World Science Fiction Convention, or in other words by the fans. To be a member of a worldcon you first have to be a member. The award was first given in 1954 to Alfred Bester's novel *The Demolished Man*. The award was just called the Science Fiction Achievement Award back then and it was not until several conventions later that it was decided to name the award after Hugo Gernsback who was the creator of the first true science fiction magazine, *Amazing*, way back in 1926. The award is a gold space ship on a pedestal and is quite an honor to win. The other major award given in the field, the Nebula award, is an award given by the Science Fiction Writers of America to what they feel is the best novel of the year. The two awards do not often agree.

Anyway, this night I was not going to be caught at the back of a crowded auditorium. I didn't have the money to join in the official banquet - \$10 for chicken is a bit steep - so we all went to Tippy's Taco House. Oy, my ucers! Only masochists must go there to eat. Anyway, we got back to the hall in time to be in the first row behind a moving wall that seperated us from the rich diners. The wall would be removed when the official presentation was to begin. Nice wall. Green. At my left was one of the apes in human clothing--I wonder if that's really make-up or his real appearance? The people by the wall were so bored that they actually began buying copies of THRUST. I had to run back to the room to resupply myself. Finally the doors parted and there he was -- to master andrew j. offutt. It took him about a seconds to completely lose the audience. I don't know what happened but sitting through the proceedings was a nightmare. I would rather watch repeats of *Lost in Space*. Ellison got tired of waiting to receive his Hugo and went up onto the podium to tell offutt something that we believe was uncomplimentary. Finally the awards were given out as follows:



Alexandria Pipe and
Drum Band photo © 1974 William Fink



Best Swords & Sorcery: Ron and Judith
Miller as Hadron of Hestor & Tavia of
Tjanath (from E. R. Burroughs)



Escapes from the Planet of the Apes



Cecce Nuker and John T. Symborski, Jr.
Maryland Medieval Militia



Cohen, the Barbarian



Cheech Wizard

M A S Q U E R A D E



From Poul Anderson's Queen of Air



and Darkness

BALL



Most Primal: Tim and Morning G'Zell as characters from P.J.Farmer's novel Flesh



Judges' Choice and Most Beautiful/Best of Show: Mike & Carol Resnick as the Ice Demon and the White Sybil by C.A. Smith



A lost harpy.



A character from the play, Warp

Best Novel: **RENDEZVOUS WITH RAMA** by Arthur C Clarke
Best Novella: **"THE GIRL WHO WAS PLUGGED IN"** by James
Tiptree, Jr.
Best Novelette: **"THE DEATHBIRD"** by Harlan Ellison
Best Short Story: **"THE ONES WHO WALK AWAY FROM OME-
LAS"** by Ursula K Le Guin
Best Professional Editor: **BEN BOVET**
Best Professional Artist: **FRANK KELLY FREAS**
Best Dramatic Presentation: **SLEEPER**
Best Fanzine: **ALGOL and THE ALIEN CRITIC** (tie)
Best Fan Writer: **SUSAN WOOD**
Best Fan Artist: **TIM KIRK**
SPECIAL HUGO AWARD: CHESLEY BONESTELL

We were finally given our pardon and were allowed to depart the banquet riasco and set up for our party. We got our two coffee pots going and the bathtub filled with ice for the whipped cream. We were making Irish coffee with real scotch. People actually recommended our concoction to others. The party had a slow start until one of our people Rich Weinstein found David Gerrold wandering around and dragged him to our room. Then came in Lin Carter periodically for coffee, Ted White, Katherine MacClaine, Jim Bean, and Tom Monteleone. Gerrold was the real hit of the party. He sat and talked to

the assembled group from midnight to around five in the morning. I just wish we had more tapes left for the conversation, but I suppose he would not have said all that he had if he knew he was being taped.

Finally came the problem of what to do at six o'clock in the morning when the sun rises. Sleep? Wake? What difference does it make when one is in a fog. Monday rose inevitably--thank you sun? We saw some die-hard fans in the lobby still partying but returned to our hotel to find a drunk, a huge man in a tuxedo, a big cigar for a winner for taking the award away from him. He asked us directions for the door of the hotel which was about five feet away. I staggered back to our room to try and sleep a bit but my stomach insisted on being hungry. "Shut up," I said. One thing you discover when you don't sleep is that you need a lot more food to keep moving. We wandered in a daze, paid the hotel bill and went to night club where the show was owed packed up our belongings, and checked out. We just stayed long enough to hear Gerrold (among others) discussing television science fiction (see Gerrold's children's show, Land of the Lost on NBC Saturday mornings at 10:00) and left. Pity. The next Worldcon is in Australia which is a bit too far away. 1976 the con will be in Kansas City with R. A. Heinlein and Gunder Horn. The con is always Baltimore in February and Disclave in DC next Memorial day--if I have the strength to make them.

WORLDCON FROM THE INSIDE

DISconcerted
by David F. Bischoff

Discon II was conceived in the warped, frazzled mind of Jay Haldeman, perpetrated by the members and hangers-on of the Washington Science Fiction Association, and now lies as a mere memory in the heads of almost five thousand fans of that nebulous thing we term 'science fiction'.

But what a memory! What a weekend!
What happened? What insidious events took place behind the tattered stage curtain where we workers frantically pulled strings (and other things) to make such a bummy behemoth of a science fiction convention rattle on with some veneer of order concealing the true chaos of the thing?

It would take volumes to describe. (Well, more words than I'm about to bother with here, anyway.)

So gentle reader; you must content yourself with a few random fast-cut, strobe-lit glimpses of the con through the somewhat glazed irises of your guide.

(Come Dante; it's a long way down.)

ACT I (Prelude)

After the bid for Discon II was thoroughly trounced by Boston at the St. Louiscon in 1969, one might have thought the weary D.C. bidders would have shrugged their shoulders and given up. Ah; but you do not know those bidders!

They rallied and defeated the Big Apple itself (NYC) for the right to work themselves to death putting on the World Science Fiction Convention for 1974.

Somehow (ask not for details) I found myself on the Program Committee with the excellent company of Joe Haldeman and Alan Huff. Our job was to formulate, co-ordinate, and get unwary authors and the like to participate on the program, designed to satiate those fans who go to cons to watch people talk about SF and related subjects (the weirdst!).

A simple enough job. A few troubles, here and there, but on the whole, a simple job. As a matter of fact it was so easy that Joe found time to take a loooooonnnngg vacation with winsome wife, Gay, while the rest of us sweated it out back home in the USA. Actually, he'd written all his invitations etc. before he left.

Meanwhile, I wrote my letters and dreamed up ways to utilize the SF writers who were reeled in for our dire machinations, aided and abetted by Alan Huff, boy genius. (Blame most of it on him.)

Looking on all the while in amazement at the great, tireless people doing the real work. And I mean work. The blood, sweat, and tears as some forgotten fat Englishman phrased it. The dull drudgery of financing, collating, planning; everything vital to the success of the convention which moved up on us like some inexorable time monster.

For the sake of your sanity, I shall not detail the tasks these brave people had to surmount; only extend to them my heart felt gratitude for undertaking such. They are better people than I.

Look in the front of your program book for the names; I'm afraid if I undertook any sort of list, I'd leave someone out, and bore you in the process.

Anyway, the summer of '74 was a frantic one. Meetings held; phone calls phones; letters, letters, letters....

Most of the interesting aspects of that time I hope to relate in my article about Harlan Ellison in the upcoming issue of THRUST SCIENCE FICTION, since most of what happened then that was interesting revolved around that man. (The piece will be an intro to our fabulous prize: an interview with the guy. Look for it.)

So fasten your seat belts 'cos here comes:

ACT 2 (The First Day, and the Next)

Thursday dawned, the initial day of the con. Arrgh! With some trepidation, I made my way to the Sheraton-Park to see how things were progressing.

I spent most of the afternoon watching my fellows running about, getting things whipped into shape, yelling at each other through walkie-talkies going insane. I was surprised at how well things were going.

Officially, things were not scheduled to get underway until the next day. I wanted to tell that to the myriad people lined in front of the registration desk.

I caught glances of the Big Name Authors when I passed the bars, but I wasn't worried much about them. Joe Haldeman, a pretty huge name himself the

se days in the SF field was our agent in the Rooms of Libation, seeing that they didn't drink all the booze by consuming a good bit of the stuff himself.

I don't think anyone noticed but I was shaking a lot that afternoon. Nervous. Why? I had to pick up Harlan Ellison at Dulles Airport.

At that time, mention my name to Harlan and you might have had a fuming author to contend with. You see, I wrote this dumb review of one of his books and... well, that will be covered next issue.

In a letter I had apologized to him and that apology had been accepted; but I still wasn't exactly sure of how he'd react to me picking him up at Dulles.

Anyway, evening came and I left. With Chris Lampton (who wanted to meet Harlan) I ventured out to meet the star of our con (he's the star anywhere he goes) and get him safely to his rooms reserved at the nearby Shoreham Americana.

To shorten a lengthy story, I completed my mission, straightened things out with Harlan, found him to be just an incredibly likable fellow, deposited him on his adoring fans, and felt pretty good about the whole thing.

It was then that I knew that everything was going to be OKAY with the convention.

Well, I was almost right.

(Speeding up; hang on.)

---Friday. The show was on.

I rolled in from my suburban home, ready for anything. I mean, when an event has been years in preparation, and the initial official day comes, it makes for fluttering hearts.

The registration lines were no less long, which was good. We knew we wouldn't go broke with the affair with new members pouring in at nine bucks a head.

I consulted the Big People (Jay Haldeman, Ron Bounds, et. al.) and besides the usual minor complaints, everything was going well.

"Good luck with the program," blurted Ron, caught between two bouts of trouble shooting.

"Thanks," I called to him across the CQ room, from which emanated the orders running the convention. Let me tell you about the CQ room. It was a mess.

Program books, Roger Zelazny poetry books given out free to the first 1000 members, name plates, movies, film projectors, other paraphernalia all scattered about the room amongst the busy committee members doing the daily mimeo newspaper of the con (The Discard), yelling orders over the static of the room's walkie-talkie, handling problems one by one as they came to the front door. And there was this delapidated cot upon which the night-man could rest his weary frame, ready in case any trouble pounced upon the con.

I loved it.

I got the heck out of it though, marvelling at my associates' energy, and made my way down to the Sheraton Hall to see about getting the program underway.

That was a larger room. I figured it could fit over a thousand and for a few items of the program, it did.

To the rear was a gift from Heaven for us program people: a green room. We stocked it with coffee, drinks of other sorts, and congenial welcomes for our guests--the speakers about to go on. It even had a direct line to the White House; the President of the U.S. uses it whenever he's at an event there.

There I found beaming Alan Huff with the usual beer can clutched in his hand.

"Joe's out reminding the people on today's panels what time they're to be here."

I stretched out on the luxurious couch in the green room, and watched people trickle in to the Hall. Relaxation is always the most exquisite when you know your companions are hard at work.

At noon, the program began and ran like well-oiled clockwork. Occasionally, I would tear myself away from the fascinating speakers to traipse about the hotel searching for various people for various reasons. It was on these jaunts that I got short looks at what was going on outside my little universe of the program room.

I was staggered by the size of the art and huckster rooms. Brief chats with the people manning them and their heads (Bob Pavlot, Art; Bob Madle, Hucksters) informed me that all was well--most gratifying news. Both display rooms boasted some great items. I would have liked to linger over the beautiful stuff there and buy a few things but duty called. So I reluctantly stopped drooling over the luscious Tim Kirk paintings and went searching for authors.

Friday, the first selections for the program were terrific. Extremely interesting. We had a fellow from NASA, Dr. Somethingorother address the hordes concerning the past, present and future of space flight; and faithful Fred Pohl gave a fine speech (witty, clever, thought-stirring) on the future of Man in his environment, that earned storms of applause.

But, without a doubt, the big item of the afternoon was the verbal brawl between Isaac Asimov and Harlan Ellison. Isaac sallied forth with his bludgeon wit from the podium, while panther Harlan paced back and forth on a special stand we put up in the center of the room, slashing back with his room-long verbal claw.

They love each other, believe it or not.

Anyway, the packed house ate it up, and got some funny stories and interesting information in the bargain.

Afterwards, Jay Kay Klein, the guest of honor (fan) gave a funny slide show somewhat marred by a defective machine.

I had to leave for work (at NBC Washington) but managed to sneak out early to catch the preview showing of Harlan's new film A BOY AND HIS DOG.

I should have stayed at work. Agony. The con had paid out a couple thousand dollars, all tolled, to get the 35mm projectors needed to show the thing (a rough cut by the way) and that night the machines did us in again.

For someone as concerned with the total success of the convention as I, it was a severe blow. I saw poor Jay making as if to cut his wrists in front of the whole auditorium, blathering something about suing the projection company.

I was depressed. Word that the evening's musical performance of Alexis Gilliland's 2001A SPACE OPERA had been a howling success served as a tonic, but not much.

You have to understand the incredible hassles involved in getting that film, its producer, and Harlan to Discon. Here Harlan was giving a simply grand show, entertaining the heck out of the fan's and we can't show the film he's come 3,000 miles to enthuse over!

ACT 3 (in which Harlan shows his film, and Doris gets her oats)

Besides a small fracas involving an author and a bar, Saturday came up over a smooth-going con.

Nice parties the night before. Attendance growing steadily. Press and television coverage of the affair is somewhat lacking in excellence but there all the same. Nice compliments from satisfied fans. And the film projection people were slaving over their equipment madly trying to avoid a suit.

I had some sleep in me and was in good spirits. Harlan's ticktockman must have really been running the program because things went marvelously. All the scheduled panelists showed up--and a few extra to boot. I was floating on proverbial cloud Nine, and reached Nirvana with Roger Zelazny's (pro guest of honor) simply beautiful and inspiring speech.

He detailed randomly the various incidents on his road to glory, including his meeting with Harlan back when Harlan was just a fan who regaled him with exhortations of what a great writer he was destined to become. He invoked images of a blooming talent; its frustrations, its excitements. Like I say, a great talk from a great writer.

And all that were delicious frosting on the cake of the panels remaining, which features such greats as Keith Laumer, Poul Anderson, Kelly Freear, Gordy Dickson, Leigh Brackett... and I could go on and on extolling their respective merits.

Although slightly frayed around the edges of their minds from the work, my compatriots were enjoying themselves as much as I. It was a total mishap, an OFFICIAL button at that convention, having people telling you they were enjoying themselves, watching the young fans ogle the pros with awe... remembering your own first convention, how many years ago?

(Pardon my interlude...)

Every year at the World Science Fiction convention, it is traditional to hold the Masquerade.

I've heard some fans who thought ours was the best ever. Some who hated it. Whatever else it was, it was too long.

Over a hundred costumes, many along with special time consuming presentations made it painful to sit so long. But some of the costumes were simply breathtaking. Heck with the critics. I enjoyed it. And, most important, it was well organized, well executed. Ah, the efficiency of us Washingtonians...

And then came the dreaded moment; a second attempt to show A BOY AND HIS DOG. Harlan was up front once more, all fingers crossed, trying to amuse the vast audience with things he hadn't told them about the film, answering all sorts of questions, putting on a dandy on by himself. But wonder of wonders, the film crew had put their stuff together correctly, and we had a movie to watch.

And a good one. Being a film student myself, I found it very absorbing to view a feature film in rough form, noting for myself where things should be out, added, changed. Generally, where the film stayed with Harlan's Nebula-award-winning story it succeeded as cinema, and where it deviated, it faltered. Luckily, it was an almost literal interpretation of the tale.

And the dog that played Blood, the intelligent mutt sidekick to rover Vic, was just mind blasting, a real show stopper.

The crowd dispersed, satisfied. The committee left, relieved. I took off for some parties, which were all over the sprawling hotel and did some sprawling of my own.

But then you don't want to hear about that....

Act 4 (In which Harlan gets a Hugo and the banqueters get heartburn)

Of all the days of the con, perhaps it is Sunday that will stick to the roof of my mind, like particularly adhesive peanut butter.

Mind you; everything went well. The program moved along as well as in its first two days. The whole convention crew was pleased.

But on Sunday, you see, I got to give the intros to most of the panels. I'm sure that most of the people involved have forgotten my introductions (they were quite forgettable) but I never will. (I saved them for posterity with my tape recorder).

What a thrill it was to stand up before an audience and call their attention to the great authors and editors I had along side of me. Take a time trip back to the Bischoff of five years ago, and tell him what would happen at the Discon and you'd get awed disbelief.

Things went by as a wonderful dream that day. I was really getting into it all. I felt so privileged to be sitting in the green room, welcoming the panelists and talking with them.

One bummer though. I had purchased the advance copy of Analog with stories by Harlan, Joe Haldeman, and offcutt, and got them to sign it, along with editor Mr. Ben Bova himself. I put it down in the green room, and the next thing I knew, I had no autographed advance copy of Analog. I should have known better than to trust something like that in a roomful of authors. Can't trust 'em. Actually, I think that Huff took it. But then I'm the suspicious sort. Just kidding. Probably some maid copied it. If you see a maid with an autographed copy of Analog, please notify me.

Afternoon gave way to evening, and the annual awards banquet. To avoid Sheraton Park heartburn I dined out and got Italian Restaurant heartburn. I managed to crawl in to see the awards distributed. Which explains why I wasn't able to go up to the podium and accept my Hugo for 'The Girl Who Was Plugged In'.

(I'm James Tiptree, you know.)

Seriously, that was the main reason I struggled in to see that man if he won. He did, but he didn't show. People tell me that he was there; Harlan claims he spoke with him over a hotel phone. The guy lives in Virginia.

Anyway, Harlan accepted his Hugo for "The Deathbird" most graciously, perhaps bridging the rift between him and fandom yawning since 1969 (see his article in Clarion III).

ACT 5 (The Shakespearean Anticlimax, complete with death scenes)

Monday.

Usually on the last day of conventions, I'm a burned out zombie--totally drained.

But the last day of Discon II, I was exhilarated. All the tricky parts were far behind me. We were home free, and had but to drift to conclusion. Evidently, the panelists didn't realize that they were supposed to be tired and listless. Things were just as exciting on the panels as any other part of the con that day. And it all went just as well.

Jack Chalker finished auctioning off salable items. Kim Weston concluded the film shows. Ron Bounds and Jay Haldeman actually found time to rest in the green room. Mike Hixon finally abandoned his precious walkie-talkies for less strenuous pursuits. The whole convention sort of wound down peacefully, contentedly. The art show folded down; the hucksters packed away their books and tents and fled into the night like nomadic Arabs; Jay handed over the official gavel of the World SF Society to the splendid fellows of Aussiecon, who are going to put on a fine con next year, Australian style.

It all made for a peaceful, satisfied glow inside me. Think about it. What other fans of anything are able to get together and share greetings with their fellow fans, along with the people who make their enthusiasms possible; in our case, the wonderful science fiction writers who give of their time to meet the fans on a personal level. We science fiction readers are very lucky, indeed.

But I was sentimental. Porgive me. If you were there, I hope you enjoyed yourself, and this article serves as a view of the thing from a different point. If you've never been to a convention... well, you don't know what you've been missing.

Time to pull the plug on the electric typer. Good to meet you, who stare down at these words, and hope to talk to you again sometime. Like next issue, where we will have the incredible adventure of:

HARLAN ELLISON VS. THE SPANNING BISCHII

By all means, tune in.

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HUCKSTER ROOM AND ART SHOW



by D. Douglas Pratz

The Discon 2 art show was undoubtedly the largest and most incredible science fiction art display ever presented. In the spacious gymnasium sized room were displayed 1275 pieces by 132 artists, amateur and professional. The quality, as always, ran the gamut, excellent to poor, but the large quantity of breathtaking work was very impressive.

There was a beautiful display of original paintings by the immortal Chesley Bonestell on loan from the Smithsonian. There were large and beautiful displays by Kelly Freas, Eddie Jones, Steve Hickman, Tim Kirk, George Barr, Vincent DiFate, Jeff Jones, and Schoenherr, Thole, the list goes on almost endlessly. There were paintings, drawings, tapestries, crewel, stained glass, sculptures. There was science fiction, fantasy, gothic, horror. The diversity itself was endless.

Judging the display were Jack Gaughan, Sandra Meisel, Ken Moore, Rick Sternback and Steve Stiles. The first place winners were as follows:

Action Awards: professional - "Sinbad" by Steve Hickman
 amateur - "The Golden Ones" by Frances Evans
 Sculpture: professional - "View Over Atlantis" by W. Sean Spacher
 amateur - "Pen Yr Awst Chess Set" by Joseph Mayhew
 Science Fiction Art: professional - "Ringworld" by Don Davis
 amateur - "Untitled #1" by Thomas Cauty
 Fantasy Art: professional - "Revelations at Sunrise" by Michael Whelan
 amateur - "Nymph, Maiden and Crone" by Nancy Fink
 Astronomical Art: professional - "Jupiter Seen From Io" by Ron Miller
 amateur - "Towards the Farside" by Paul Marxen
 Cartoon: professional - "The Nightfall" by Tim Kirk
 amateur - "Star Bleep" by Cory Correll

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Judges Choices: Jack Gaughan - "Untitled XX" by James Cunningham
 Steve Stiles - "Asimov's Stories" by Karel Thole
 Sandra Meisel - "Jamaican Dancer #4" by Richard Powers
 Rick Sternback - "Mars Phoebe Base" by Don Davis

Many of the works were sold at the auctions, and prices ran very high. Twelve pieces sold for over \$200. Highest prices were paid by the University of Maryland in Baltimore, \$450 for "Sinbad" by Steve Hickman and \$450 for a Kelly Freas library poster original.

The display was marred only by the fact that three pieces were stolen, despite tight security. I doubt very many of the thousands who walked into the room came out without a sense of awe of what can be done by artists of such talent and imagination.

The huckster room at Discon 2 was fascinatingly diverse, as well as huge. It was contained in an exhibition hall even larger than the art display room, so large that the 140 tables of items for sale covered only three quarters of the space.

Wares included not just science fiction books and magazines, but also comics, Star Trek pictures and posters, buttons, old records, swords and medieval armour, everything imaginable. The Library of Congress even had a table with information about tapes and braille for the blind.

It was a wonderland of nostalgic items, and a cornucopia of current material.

In addition, there was a screen game (similar to the paddle ball games now found all over) with spaceships, and a computer hook-up allowing fans to have a conversation with a computerized paranoid. The computer hook-up was with a Stanford University Hazeltine 2000 computer, and one scored by making the computer feel more paranoid by conversation through the type-in terminal.

Many thousands of dollars changed hands and many thousands of fans and dealers went away quite pleased.

MOVIE REVIEW

A BOY AND HIS DOG



by Robert Schwier

Harlan Ellison has made a movie. At least, he has had final say over a script and setting. After, as he said, "twelve years of seeing my work butchered by producers, twelve years of openly complaining about the visual interpretations of my stories."

He made that comment at Discon II where, after numerous delays caused by faulty projectors, he revealed his latest creation in rough cut form to an audience of eager science fiction fans. Rough cut means that the scenes have been spliced together but not finely edited. Scenes mentioned in this article may have been changed or omitted by the time the movie gets to the theatres.

Provisionally, the title is "A Boy and His Dog", but that may also be changed.

Ellison can be classed as one of the best scriptwriters in the country, because he can write an hour's television drama that does not turn topabulum. He is also very proud of this work which is understandable considering the efforts and money that went into it and Ellison's delusions of grandeur.

Unfortunately one should never trust the rantings of a writer about his own work. The effect is merely disappointing.

Based on the novella, "A Boy and His Dog" that appeared in *The Beast That Shouted Love At the Heart of the World*, the movie is set after the absolute collapse of society and purveys Ellison's contempt for the middle class.

The story takes place at least a decade after a disaster, supposedly a war, which buries a city in a sea of mud. The ruins are populated with men, either loners or in packs, who spend their time searching for deposits of canned food and shooting at each other. There are few women and considering the way the rovers, as Ellison calls the men, fight for those women, they are getting scarcer.

Before the collapse of the civilization, police dogs were bred who were intelligent and telepathic. The dog of the title, Blood, is one of these and he is teamed up with a youth played by a new actor named Don Johnson. Johnson makes his character seem like Candide or one of the Hardy Boys rather than a savage who has seen and practised every sort of mayhem in order to survive.

It seems that Vic, the boy, is horny and the movie drags on through the first half with him reiterating this feeling while he wanders through scenes of desolation and runs into all male groups of survivors going about their daily lives.

Ellison also postulates an underground settlement of survivors from the middle class who have fashioned a society based on life in the 1930's-- small towns in metal caves. All of the banality that Ellison accuses the middle class of is enforced by a tyranny in this city headed by Jason Robards. Down there people can be condemned to death for just being unhappy. The viewer may be surprised that underground trees that grew in darkness have leaves but they do.

Oh, there is a love story even. Vic, with the help of his dog finally does find a girl played by Susanne Benton and rapes her, then follows her into the underground city like a faithful lapdog. In the gentle reader does not understand that passage, it's not his fault, but that is what actually happens. Vic gets emotionally involved with the girl after a fight to keep her for himself from about a dozen other horny dudes.

The movie's setting creaks with improbabilities. More than a decade after manufacturing has ceased the rovers carry around automatic weapons with fresh ammunition. Ellison even pulled out an underground city from rotting pulp magazines and H. Rider Haggard.

At one point the dog mentions something called a green screamer while the soundtrack carried a high screech. It is not clear what one of those things is.

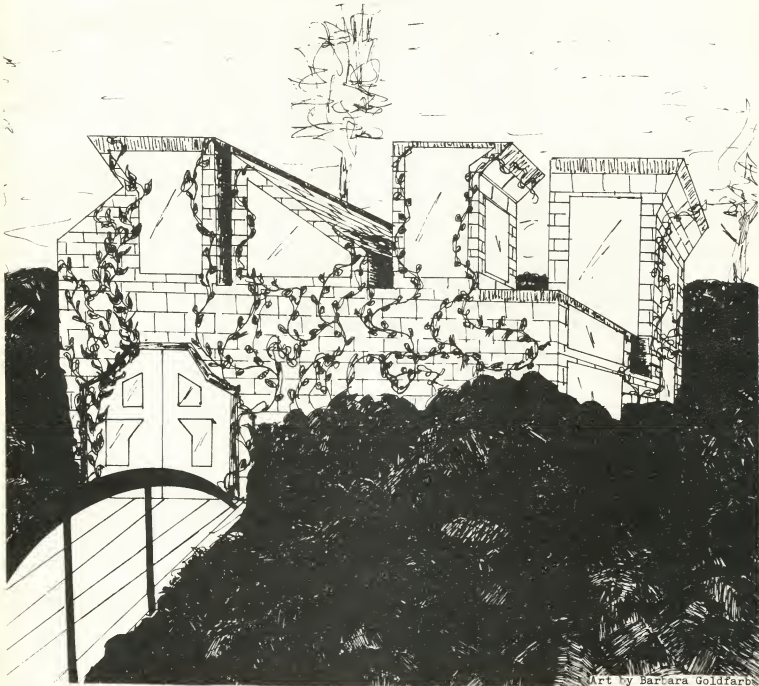
There is a character in the credits named Fellini. In the whole movie that name is not mentioned. Apparently he is a man who keeps catamites and slaves who are ruled over by his whips. Vic asks of him, "Why do people follow a man like that?" Blood answers, "Charisma."

One problem with the movie was that the opening segments were too long and tedious. Bringing out the background of a situation in movies is perhaps more important in science fiction than in mundane films because the viewer shares less common knowledge with the writer about the world the writer is creating than in fiction about contemporary or even historical subjects.

This immersion in technicalities was brought on by a complete lack of feeling for the movie. It seems like a short story that has been expanded beyond its weight. Except for some of the language, the whole movie could have been trimmed down to the size of a Twilight Zone show. Many of the scenes would have had to be removed but they would not have been missed.

Considering that the ending was the punchline of the original story, this movie is a ninety minute shaggy dog story.

NO HOLE IS SACRED



Art by Barbara Goldfarb

by Steven L. Goldstein, Felipe Alfonso, William Pink, and Robert Schwler

Driving down the right hand lane of the highway in early evening came a late model Electro-van Mark IV. The van was moving quietly through the slush on the road with its headlights off. In the van were two men of middle age, one of whom was smoking a cigarette. The other one looked around nervously.

"Seen any pigs?" says the smoker.

"Not since the last radar trap a mile back, Fred."

"I think we're in luck, Sam. It looks like a quiet night out."

"WATCH OUT FOR THAT PILE!"

The van swerved to the left, barely avoiding a collision with a pile of garbage. "Phew! That was close!" Fred turned on the window washers to try to get the accumulated grime off of the windshield.

"Who the hell would throw that stuff in the middle of the road? It'll take the road crews extra time to clear off all these messes. Why don't people have pride anymore? Who does all these things?"

"I don't know. Some dumb jerk who took a big chance, but if we don't find a place to ditch this stuff soon, we may be forced to do the same."

"Hey Fred, did you see last night on the three dees that some pigs in Chicago were using piles of garbage like that to trap some poor dumpsters?"

"Serves them right if they think that just because they see a pile of junk that it's safe for others to do the same." Fred lowers his window a small crack while holding his breath and ducking the hard pieces and decides against spitting. You never know when there may be a Pigmobile nearby. "Sam, isn't this near the turnoff?"

Sam looks around through the thick smog. "I thought that this was near the pit. That last time I spotted it was in broad daylight. Try a right turn over here."

The van drives on through the slush for a few hundred yards in the dark and then stops. "Damn Sam, we should be there by now. You want to go out and take a look?"

Sam's face takes on a look of repugnance at the thought of leaving the van. "You son-of-a-bitch. You always want to do the easy stuff. How the hell do I know that there isn't a rat pack out there?"

"Don't worry, Sam, I'll cover for you." Fred pauses to squash a roach that was crawling up the steering wheel. "I know that the pit is somewhere around here. Try for that pile over there. It looks familiar."

Sam dons his mask amid much grumbling. "For God's sake, at least you could put that cigarette out!" he blurts out. "We don't want a methane flash fire!"

Sam opens the door and sinks into the mire. Fred screams, "shut that God-damned door!" Sam closes the door while sinking further into the mush.

Fred sits at the controls nervously, frequently looking around to see if there is anyone about. His fingers are at the controls of the lasergun. One never can tell when a rat pack may approach. Some of them have been known to rip open a van to munch on men. After a few moments he gets impatient and opens his window a crack. "See it yet?"

"Yep," replies Sam. "We're standing right on it."

"But that's crazy. We just found it last week." Sam climbs back into the van, smearing mush all over the floor. He throws an unidentified bone out of the cab and closes the door. "They are lasting less and less lately. The economy is in terrible shape."

"Shit. Well then, where does that leave us?"

"With a van half full of shit. Just turn around and drive on. I guess we'll have to make some house calls."

Fred starts up the van's engine but it refuses to move. "Damn..."

"What's wrong?"

"Wheels are stuck."

"Well, lower the caterpillar treads before we sink."

The Electro-vans optional caterpillar treads are lowered and the standard tires are drawn up into the vehicle. The van starts up back towards the road leaving the stinking plain of dead things behind.

Sam leans over to turn on the police radio. "I haven't seen any Pigs in quite some time. We'd better monitor the Pig band to see what they're up to."

"Nevermind that. You can ask them. There's a roadblock up ahead."

"Quick! Turn around!"

"Too late. They've picked us up already." Lights flash on from all sides lighting up the filthy vehicle.

"HALT!"

"Oh shit, now we're in for it," cries Sam. "We don't have a full credit left on our pit cards between the both of us." Fred slams on the brakes and the van slides up to the baracades for the remaining hundred yards.

Twin 33mm cannons face the Electro-van from the two Pig battlevans facing them. A third Pig-cruiser armed with mortar hovers above.

"ALL RIGHT," shouts a loudspeaker from the hovercraft. "COME OUT OF THAT VAN WITH YOUR HANDS UP!"

"Stay put Sam," says Fred.

"Stay put? Are you out of your mind? You may think you're going to fight them, but I'm not going to hang around here with those guns aimed at me."

"YOU HAVE TEN SECONDS TO RESPOND."

"Don't be a fool Sam," says Fred while lighting another cigarette. "They're not going to waste ammunition on two dumpsters like us."

"ONE, TWO THREE..."

Fred opens his window a crack and shouts "We know our rights! You can't make us go out in that mess!"

"DUMPSTERS HAVE NO RIGHTS. FOUR..."

"I'm leaving," says Sam.

"Don't be a moron. Let's wait it out." At the end of ten seconds, to more bass. Fred blows out smoke rings. Then an officer comes out of the Pig-cruiser on the right dressed in a sparkling white uniform. Picking his way carefully through them, he tries to avoid splashing his uniform.

Fred smiles. "See, what did I tell you. They want to do business."

"Business?"

"Stop shaking Sam, I'm getting carsick."

"How can you be so calm? We're sure to end up on a shippile now."

The officer reaches the van with a look of achievement on his face. As he reaches for the handle of the van's door, Fred violently opens it. Hard. The officer tries to reach for his weapon but loses his balance, sliding into the mush. Fred steps out of the van, holding his hands up and says "I'm only following your instructions, sir."

"You'll pay for that, you bastard," hollers the officer as he squirms in the mush, trying to regain his footing. "Let me see your pit permit!"

"Pit permit? Do we have a pit permit, Sam?"

Sam looks at Fred and smiles. "What do we need with a pit permit? We're not carrying anything."

"Cut that shit out!" cries the officer while still trying to rise to his knees. "I know what you have in the van. I can smell it. Where's your permit--the one you need to make purchases with?"

"Don't know what you're talking about," answers Fred.

"Here," says Sam. "Let me offer you my hand."

"Get your filthy dumper hands off me! I can manage by myself," says the Officer as he finally rises to his feet. "Now then, let's see your pit permit, you morons. Not having it is going to cost you years on the shippile."

Fred tells a baldface lie. "I tell you, we don't have one or need one. We're only taking a nice evening ride through the countryside, right Sam?"

"NOW CUT THAT SHIT!" The officer takes his weapon out of his belt and aims it at the two men. "I intend to get to the bottom of this. Open up your van."

Sam looks at Fred helplessly. "Do as the man says, Sam."

Sam slides over to the lock and fumbles with the keys. He finds the right ones and unlocks the rear doors. The officer pushes them aside and peers inside. "Just as I thought," he says. "You're in luck today, my friends. It's only half full."

Sam stares at the officer uncomprehendingly. "You understand me? I mean to say that we now can unload some crap on you, shit head. It's that or we run you in to the shippile. Understand?"

"You made your point officer," says Fred. The officer motions to Sam and takes the van's keys. Then he pushes a button on a device on his belt. Ten men come out of the second cruiser with wheelbarrows. Sam and Fred watch silently as their van is inexorably filled to the brim with garbage.

When the last inch of space is occupied with debris, the officer politely returns the keys to Fred and indicates that they are free to go.

Fred and Sam return to the van in silence and Fred starts up the engine.

"Just one moment, please," says the officer. He feels around in his pockets and throws wads of old chewing gum, used contraceptives, and one empty pack of matches into the van. "Now you can go."

"Thank you officer. Goodnight." Fred starts up the van, shifts into high gear, places one foot on the break and one on the accelerator, revs up the engine, and leaves a trail of splattering shit that splashes all over the cursing officer in the white uniform.

Fred wipes his brow and says to Sam, "You see? They did do business with us."

Sam just glares at Fred and hollars "What the hell do we do now? We got more shit than when we started out."

"Well what did you expect me to do? I got a wife and kids to think about. What's a few more tons of shit when you get to thinking about it. Look around you."

"I am and I'm nauseated. LOOK OUT FOR THAT PILE!"

The van thumps. "False alarm Sam. It was only a cat."

"Was it dead?"

"It is now. Turn on the radio."

Click "Folsomes feelies for that just came feeling."

"And now for the news. That flash methane fire that is sweeping the northern part of the state is still in critical condition. The following emergency regulations will be put in effect. No cows will be allowed to bury...."

"Try another station, Sam. That fire's too far away for us to feed it."

Fred beeps his horn and skids around an old combustor. As he passes the old mobile he cracks open his window and yells "Polluter!"

Click "How much shit will you take from us for this new Scoopmobile? At some dealers you may be expected to have to rent a van to carry your payment home with you, but at Honest Harry's you can take it all right with you in your at no extra cost garbage tow. Even the most modest of pits will accommodate the expense of this... *Click*"

"Enough of that stuff," Fred mumbles. "We gotta watch out. I thought I saw a light ahead." The van slows down--this time taking no chances. Sam cracks open his window and peers out. "Shit, I can smell another roadblock. Make a right turn. I think I see a driveway."

"Driveway or not, it will do." Fred turns right and bumps over a couple of rusty old vans riddled with mortar holes.

"Better hurry! I think there's a hovercraft nearby."

"Yeah. And we're full up."

"Not for long if what I think I see ahead is for real."

Looming in the mists was an old fortress surrounded by what was once an innumerable pit but which was now filled with garbage. It's walls were cracked and covered with vines. It had a huge overhanging roof in the old op-arch school of design. Smaller piles of garbage flowed along the base of the building where rains had deposited their loads.

"This place looks too good to be true," says Sam.

"Careful. I hear that some of the richer folks around here have taken to these old relics. Some have dungeons large enough for several generations of sludge."

"So? What's the problem?"

"It sounds too easy. Look at the size of that place. There's bound to be a small army inside."

"Well I wouldn't go ahead and knock on the front door."

"Let's go see what's on the other side." The van slowly travels around the building. The hovercraft apparently had not spotted them. "I don't know if we should even try to do this," says Fred. "What are you talking about? This is a gold mine."

"Well, where the hell do you think we can dump this stuff? Our in the open where the hovercrafts can find us?"

"Look over there," says Sam. He points to a spot where a pile of garbage over the years had formed a gentle sloping gradient up to a window. "I bet that overhang will hide our actions. And I bet we can get this van up that garbage slide."

"You have got to be nuts. We drive this thing up that mess?"

"Got any other suggestions? We gotta feed our families. There just isn't any more room for this stuff at our place."

"Well, hold on and pray." Fred maneuvers the van over to the pile and slowly, tentatively, he inches the machine up the gradient in reverse. The van slides a bit and for a moment it seems that the van will plummet into the mush below, but the pile holds.

"BREAK OUT THE SHOVELS!" shouts Fred.

"EUREKA!" shouts Sam as he jimmies the window open.

In the middle of the night Robert Hamilton awakes with a start as a pile of shit lands in the middle of his bed. He sits up with a start and another hits him squarely in the face. "WHAT THE HELL IS GOING ON HERE?" he shouts as he runs to the window in time to receive a third shelfoul down his throat.

"STOP! STOP! You can't do this. I live here."

"The hell we can't," says Fred while shoveling "I'll call the police!"

"Pine. Who do you think gave us this load?" asks Sam.

"But this is my only storage area left to me."

"You're kidding," says Fred. "A place like this must have plenty of pits."

"It does but it's not mine anymore. My wife divorced me and her alimony took all my pits. I had to let all my servants go. All I have is room left for me alone."

"Tough shit, buddy," says Fred. "We've been carrying this load all night. Either help us or keep out of the way! Tell us about your problems some other time."

"But my wife took the pits I tell you! What am I supposed to do with all this?"

"That's your problem, mac."

Sam touches Fred. "That's about the last of it. Let's make tracks."

Sam and Fred re-enter their van and slide down garbage pile leaving behind a bewildered victim of crime.

As they move on down the road, the duo start singing songs of happier days. All is well. Now both their families will have room to buy new food for some time to come. The van slips merrily down the deserted road as dawn approaches.

Suddenly Fred stops the van.

"What's wrong?" says Sam.

"Do you hear that?"

Sam listens for a moment hearing only the croaking of the birds coughing their morning song. All he sees is a bright spot off to the east where the scientists tell us that the sun rises.

"I don't hear anything."

Fred starts the van up again, but slower this time. "I tell you there's something wrong. Traffic. There's no traffic."

"So what? It's early."

"They look at each other in horror. "OH NO! THE GARBAGE FLOWS!"

Fred and Sam fight to wrench the wheel around and turn the van in high gear in the other direction. The van slides out of control and stalls. In the rear view mirror they see a mountain of slush advancing on the vehicle. Fred gets the engine started and the van moving just as the first breakers hit the Electro-van at a force of over 100 miles an hour. The van vanishes in the river of sludge.

Two men walk along the clean street, discussing politics. One suddenly stops and says, "Hey Frank, did you hear something?"

"What man?"

"That pile of shit over there is talking."

"Man, your mind is really shot to hell."

"No mean it. Listen."

"...that's another fine mess you got me into, Fred."

The University of Maryland Science Fiction Society meets every other Monday during the semester in various locations on the College Park campus (usually in the Student Union Building, room 2136). Check the diamondback campus bulletin for info or call Steve at 490-7663 for club information.

THE NEW COLOSSUS

Dennis R. Bailey

Art by Steve Hull

Let's see... when it's five in the evening in New South Wales, it's nine a.m. in Honolulu, right? Twenty years in the overseas diplomatic service, and I still can't remember which side of the International Date Line we're on. I glanced up at the chronometers above the Bennings Port. Nine a.m. was right, and I set my watch back.

I was standing in Canberra Intercontinental Station, baggage in hand, waiting to have my atoms scrambled and bounced off a satellite. Relay transport always makes my edgy; in the colloquialism of an earlier day I suppose I'd have been termed a "white-knuckle flier." Not many people fly anymore -- well, not for business purposes, anyway-- but that was precisely the way I'd complete the second leg of my journey, the hop from Hawaii into San Francisco. I was on a foreign aid assignment to the United States.

The fellow in line ahead of me stepped onto the Pad and disappeared. I moved into place and waited while the technician checked my visa and reset the Portal. I tried to unfocus my eyes. I wasn't sure what sort of Pad set-up they had in Honolulu, and the sudden change of scenery involved in a jump is a disorienting experience. Closing your eyes on the Pad is strictly "tourist." So there I stood, trying to look dignified with my eyes slightly crossed, standing on a Pad in Australia-- and then I was in Honolulu.



Not surprisingly, the Honolulu station was pretty empty. Hawaii, the westernmost possession of Australia, depends heavily on the tourist trade and this was the off-season. I stepped off of the Pad, exchanged pleasantries with the head technician, and headed out onto the airstrip. There were only two or three jets on the field, so finding mine--an old modified Pan American 747--was easy. I boarded, threw my luggage onto one of the racks of the near-empty cabin, and settled down for a leisurely two hour flight across the Pacific. Leisurely? Hell, it was going to be downright tedious!

The United States of America--the sound of that name, the values implied in it, the history behind it has always fascinated me. Excuse the digression, I write a specialist in Western Hemisphere affairs. I wrote my doctoral thesis on one aspect of the early emigrations from the U.S. to Australia. I've always been a little proud that my ancestors were among the first. A set of grandparents, several times removed, on my mother's side immigrated "down under" from Massachusetts, in the wake of a political debacle of their time.

I've never been quite clear on what "Watergate" entailed, but my precursors seemed to feel that it marked the beginning of decline for the States. In actuality, the U.S. had a few decades of real prominence to go. It was the outlawing of nuclear weapons that finally did him. Almost every nation on the globe has a nuclear scientist, and the bomb, by then, rendering the world situation increasingly perilous and destroying the strategic advantages formerly enjoyed by the big nations. With the inevitable scrapping of the weapons systems that followed, other factors--notably economic ones--became more important in determining a nation's power. There was a period of great mobility in relative political power and prestige among nations, during which it seemed as though the U.S. and -- um--oh yes, the U.S.S.R. were going to come out on top anyway.

That Dr. Allison Bennings was an Australian was their tough luck.

The Bennings Portal. Instantaneous transport--people, machinery, foodstuffs, anything and everything could be moved around the world in literally no time, with a minimal consumption of energy. Australia discovered it, the People's Republic of China managed to steal it. The other nations got it, too. Of course, of course, teleportation had military implications. Although the use of organic matter required both a transmitting and a receiving station, inorganic matter could be moved anywhere with only a transmitter, provided one had a set of coordinates to focus on. Nuclear bombs may have been outlawed, but teleportation became an irresistible delivery system for any amount of conventional explosives, and there was no defense against it. The Bennings Portal became the basis of the tightest bi-polar power struggle in human history.

My government wanted the United States in the Australian camp, if only for its grain-producing lands. So now it was my job, as a representative of the greatest nation on earth, to offer the benefits of modern technology--the Bennings Portal--to one of the have-not nations of the West.

It's been said that history is cyclical.

When I awoke at eight the next morning, San Francisco time, my system insisted that I was still in Canberra. I went out on the balcony of my hotel suite to catch some fresh air before calling my chauffeur and going out to brave the American motor-traffic. I was staying in one of those ancient sky-scraper affairs, and could see a good portion of the city below me. Looking down at the streets, I felt as if I'd stepped back through time to another world. Thousands of people here locked themselves into metal contraptions every morning to be propelled by petroleum vapor explosions to their daily occupations. The traffic wasn't "bumper-to-bumper", like in the old books and 2-dees; but then the population on the west coast had been decreased tremendously since those days by flooding. Whole sections of the city were abandoned, falling to ruin. Some quarters, Chinatown, for example, were

p.18 maintained as tourist attractions. I made a mental note to take in some of the points of historical interest on the east coast when I got there. The Statue of Liberty crossed my mind, as did the Pentagon and the now-deserted Federal triangle in D.C. If nothing else, it would be a polite gesture to the government whose guest I was to take a bit of interest in their history. Even the prospect of having to travel up and down the New York-Washington Complex was monumental didn't really faze me. I fancied I was becoming rather accustomed to the slow pace of the States.

That feeling evaporated quickly when, ringing up my car, I moved out onto the streets to join those chug-chugging metal dinosaurs inching along the asphalt.

I leaned back on the Naughahyde couch in Stafford's living room, straightened my cravat, and waited. Harrison Stafford was the twelfth Chairman of the United States since the governmental reorganization back in '08. The formal signing of the Technological Assistance Program agreement would, of course, be broadcast from Stafford's office in the Congressional tower tomorrow afternoon; the details of that agreement, however, had hit an apparent snag. Stafford had suggested his own apartment as the place to hold this working session on the grand old aid. Just now, he was being detained by the necessity of issuing a statement concerning an unpleasant incident which had just occurred at the Australian embassy in New York. Presently he appeared, looking quite harried.

I knew Harry Stafford pretty well from his days as American Consul in Australia. He was a smallish, middle-aged man with a salt-and-pepper beard and an apologetic manner. He habitually dressed in those military cut jumpuits that were so popular in the States due mostly to the influence of the Australian space-operas that Americans consume so voraciously. Stafford offered me a drink, which I accepted, and started by apologizing.

"I want you to know," he began, "that the Congress and I deplore the bombing of your embassy this morning, and join in condemning the actions of the radical minority responsible. A full investigation has been launched, and I assure you that--"

I waved this aside. My government would issue a statement on the matter; such things were not my province. What did concern me was the motivation behind this latest expression of Anti-Australian sentiment, and it's possible bearing on the TAP proposal. Stafford seemed reticent when I questioned him on this point. He sighed and shook his head.

"Many of my people are dissatisfied with the announced terms of the agreement," he lamented. "They accuse us of selling out to Imperialism. They object first to the partialitary to erect the Portal installations. You know, to be constructed by staffed, and maintained within American territory by agencies and personnel of the Australian government." Lots of people feel you stole Hawaii from us that way, you know.

"Secondly, they claim that the Portals are nothing but a way to increase the wealth and power of the government and big business. You've offered us only industrial and equipment transporters. The people want Bennings units suited to civilian travel usage.

"And there's one minor thing, an emotional issue. Your hardware is manufactured by Ford-Chrysler of Australia. You'll recall, we had a major depression here when most of our large corporations relocated in your country."

Stafford, I could see, was in an embarrassing and difficult political position. Winning the Bennings stations from his boss was a coup for his government. Depending upon the final terms of the agreement, his party could be out of office in a week.

"The northwestern states are beginning to lean decidedly toward the People's Republic," Stafford confessed uncomfortably. It was a difficult thing for the head of state to admit to the steadily eroding authority of the national government over its states. "I don't know if your government is

aware of this," he continued, "but China has offered several of the state legislatures separate agreements, whereby civilian teleoperation units would be installed in major cities. The issue has become most divisive."

Of course we were aware of China's offer. I had, in fact, been given the authority, for that reason, to make major concessions in the terms of our offer to the U.S.. I had hoped that it wouldn't come to this, but I had no choice now.

"Our studies show," I pointed out, "that your present transportation facilities are more than adequate to meet the needs of your dwindling population. However, we are willing, if your government so wishes it, to construct mass-transport stations in the population centers of your coastal areas. These would be available to your people for cross-continental travel. Further, my government is willing to train American technicians to operate these personnel transporters. Eventually, the routine running of these few stations would be turned over to you--although the construction, repair, and final authority over the use of the station facilities would, of course, remain in our hands. Do you think your citizens would be amenable to this?"

It was obviously more than Stafford had expected. We shook on it.

The remainder of the meeting concerned political and diplomatic trivialities: matters of procedure, legal details, etc. I found myself wishing I were back in Canberra, back in civilized territory. I had hated to make those concessions... I had been against the TAP agreement from the beginning, although I followed orders. Because once the Americans got close to those teleoperators, once they started running them themselves, it wouldn't take them long to figure out the principles involved in building the things.

And then the bloody Yanks would have the Portal too.

As far as I'm concerned, underdeveloped nations have no business with that kind of technology. They're just too unstable.

BOOK REVIEWS

Star Rider by Doris Piserchia (Bantam Books, \$1.25)

Doris Piserchia. Watch out for this name in the near future. This novel is one of the few in recent years that I just could not put down. It reads a lot like Anne McCaffery's Dragonflight but has plenty of room for fresh thought. The novel is about a girl or more exactly a Jak which is man's next evolutionary step. Jaks, when combined with an appropriate mount (related to today's dog) can travel to the stars by some sort of built in power called a jinx. (The term means much the same thing as Heinlein's grok).

Along with a universe full of Jaks looking for the mythical world of Doubleluck, there are other strange creatures in Piserchia's universe like the Varks, the Dreens, and the Gibs. The universe is fairly well overflowing with all these characters, and it is the main heroine's lot in life to try to go beyond--into the next galaxy.

The book is not without its flaws here and there but none of them are important enough to mention here. This is a good old-time book to read and enjoy.

--Steven L. Goldstein

Traitor to the Living by Philip Jose Farmer (Ballantine, 1973, \$1.25)

Philip Jose Farmer, bless his prolific little soul, has a knack for wild ideas. Not just ordinary, run-of-the-mill, wild ideas, but tremendous, spectacular, mind-boggling, wild ideas: ideas of almost mythic significance. Remember To Your Scattered Bodies Go, where everyone who ever lived was resurrected on the banks of the Riverworld? Or The Maker of Universes, with its series of "pocket universes" structured along the basic design of a multi-layered wedding cake? Or Tarzan Alive, which purported to be the authentic Biography of Lord Creystoke, the world's most famous ape man? Will the fount of ideas never stop flowing?

Apparently not. Farmer is still as creative as ever and his latest novel, Traitor to the Living, has enough wild ideas in it to give any two of those earlier books a run for their money. The premise this time is that a scientist has developed a machine for communicating with the spirits of the dead. Well, not their spirits, exactly, but their serbs (Sentient Electro-Magnetic Beings), which are floating around in the embu (Electro-Magnetic Being Universe), a kind of parallel world where everyone's electro-magnetic vibrations are recorded at the moment of death -- a scientific version of heaven, you might say, or a modified Riverworld. Well, once again, not exactly. If you consider the serbs to be souls, it is not unlike the heaven you learned about in Sunday School (or wherever you learned about such things), but Riverworld it is not. For one thing, no one in the embu has a body and, once the lines of communication are opened, they are all (you should excuse the expression) dying to have one.

Now here's the catch: the scientist who developed the machine (which is called MEMUM, by the way) is an amoral bastard who murdered his own uncle for the schematics of the device. For certain material considerations he is quite willing to reintroduce the serbs to the land of the living, using the unsuspecting Bodies of his luckless clients -- a sort of electro-magnetic demonic possession. The legacies of this sort of thing are hazy, but the Good Guys know that he'll have to be stopped.

As I say, Farmer is as imaginative as ever, but at the bottom of it all the book remains somehow unsatisfactory. The Marvelous invention remains too much in the background, appearing only once at center stage and then only too briefly. It is a tantalizing glimpse and promises much, but the promises are left unfulfilled. The novel quickly becomes a political cum espionage thriller. The characters run about here and there, engaging in numerous gunfights and even storming the castle of the wicked inventor at the end. Unfortunately this intrigue is often muddled, and the climax is irritatingly inconclusive. Could Farmer be leaving himself open for a sequel? I hope so. Volume two might be one hell of a book.

--Chris Lampton

SPECIAL FOCUS ON BRIAN M. STABLEFORD

Back in our second issue I did an extended review of the works of this new writer. For those of you new to the magazine I will summarize my previous review. Stableford wrote a trilogy for Ace Books several years back titled Dies Irae in which he re-wrote the Iliad, the Odyssey (as did R. A. Lafferty in his novel Space Chantey), and I believe the Aeneid in a science fictional format and made it come out as something truly fresh and original. His followup novel, To Challenge Chaos, was likewise an original masterpiece, unfortunately overlooked by the majority of readers.

Here comes the villain of our story--DAW Books. DAW apparently made Stableford an offer he couldn't refuse--a series to write. The first of the series, The Halcyon Drift--about a region of space where ion storms were constantly brewing was good space opera. Fine. But unfortunately since then Mr. Stableford has continued to crank out sequels to the above no-

vel to the point where he is degenerating into a good hack writer. The brilliance of the earlier novels is being worn down by this continuing series.

The main character in the series is Grainger, an old experienced space pilot that has somehow inexplicably been attacked by a mind parasite and is doomed to spend the rest of his life with a second mind to talk to. This gimmick adds absolutely nothing to any of the novels in the series. The main character could have coped with any of the problems that besets him without the mind parasite telling him what to do. All this relationship does to the books is to make them wordy - as Heinlein did in his fiasco, I Will Fear No Evil.

Grainger was rescued from a crash on a planet in the first novel and is indebted to his boss Charliot whom he hates. Every novel deals with an assignment given to Grainger by which he hopes to eventually repay his debt and become a free man again. Some character development is evident in Grainger as the mind parasite seems to be slowly weaning him away from his isolated personality which he developed during the time he was isolated on the planet due to the ship wreck, but the change is slow and unconvincing.

Novel number 2, Rhapsody in Black, deals with a very poor asteroid of a world with a discovery in it that could spell the end of civilization--or immense richness to Charliot. Novel 3, Promised Land, was a nice book with great descriptions of an artificial world. The latest novel, The Paradise Game, has to do with the question of whether genocide of an alien species is allowable to create a paradise world for man. The novels are all very easy to read and have great descriptions, but I feel that Staebled is wasting his talents on this froth, and would do much better to return to real writing.

--Steven L. Goldstein

A Midsummer Tempest by Poul Anderson (Doubleday, 1974, \$5.95)

You always knew that Poul Anderson was a good writer, right? But he's one of those hardcore boys and you know how they are: they know their science inside out, but when it comes to things like style, imagery and metaphor they're totally lacking; and they write their way out of a paper bag, as the saying goes. ...

I used to think like that - and along came Poul Anderson to blast hell out of all my pretty theories. Anderson has been writing the hard stuff for a quarter of a century now, it's true; lately, however, he's been turning on the style and writing rings around some of the top wordsmiths in the field. Now he takes on the master himself, William Shakespeare, and almost kills the bard at his own game. You have to see this to believe it.

Okay, so A Midsummer Tempest isn't exactly Hamlet, but, then, neither were most of Shakespeare's plays. What Tempest is is a pastiche of the Bard's wildest fantasies, a merry romp through a parallel world where there really is a fairy king named Oberon and a queen named Titania and a sprite named Puck; where Prospero's magic isle really exists and is inhabited by Ariel and Caliban. Anderson throws all this against a background of 17th century English history - Charles I against Cromwell and all that - and comes up with one of the dandiest heroic quests I've seen in quite a while, with Rupert, prince of the Rhine heading eastward to find Prospero's magic book, guided only by an enchanted ring and extraordinary good luck.

What really makes the book work is the language: rich and poetic, abounding in metaphor and subtle puns. Be warned, however: it is not a book to be skimmed. The writing is also dense and old-fashioned; it takes a while to get into the rhythm of it, but the effort is well worth your while.

One small quibble: Doubleday labels the book "science fiction," which, technically, it is, since Anderson goes to the trouble of introducing an alternate universe thesis. But the term "fantasy" is much truer to the spirit of the work. And a spirited work it is, indeed.

--Chris Larpton

The Dispossessed by Ursula K. LeGuin (Harper and Row, \$7.95; Science Fiction Club Book)

Few science fiction writers today, few writers in fact anywhere, write with a greater understanding of the human condition than Ursula K. LeGuin. Her characters invoke incredible empathy without resorting to cliché, her stories dig deeply into human philosophy without ever resorting to preaching. The Dispossessed is another major work by one of the most talented SF writers.

The story is about a physicist working in a society based on socialistic anarchy. The society was created by a group of refugees who fled from their mother world to its moon to escape a capitalistic government. Yet, this is not a story of good and evil. Neither society is all good or all evil, but both are detailed, complex and believable. LeGuin again manages to create two societies which are completely alien, yet completely relevant in their concepts and feelings.

The Dispossessed is a novel by a beautiful and intelligent lady.

--Doug Fratz

Flesh Gordon

Flesh Gordon is the type of movie to see if one is in a silly mood and not easily offended by explicit sex. It combines parody of the old Flash Gordon serials with some of the most atrocious sexual puns on this side of the National Lampoon and a lot of simulated sex in couples and in groups, hetero and gay. The overabundance of phallic symbols gets tiresome by about half-way into the movie, but the whole movie is redeemed by a deadpan version of King Kong invoked into existence near the end by Wang the Perverted (Ming the Merciless) and stomping over Wang saying tiredly, "A monster's work is never done." It is the type of movie to view when one wants to avoid thinking for several hours.

--Robert Schwier

The Fall of Colossus by D. F. Jones (Science Fiction Club Book)

What with some of the advance knowledge I had received about this book, I approached reading it with a certain amount of trepidation. I feared that it would simply be another half-thought out sequel to an immensely successful book and movie, Colossus (The Forbin Project). Upon hearing that in this follow-up mankind is released from its control by Colossus by the *deux ex machina* intervention of a supposedly benign Martian civilization, it seemed my worst fears were well founded. I am glad to report that I could not have been more in error.

For those who are unfamiliar with the first work, it concerns an enormous computer complex named Colossus, to which the United States relegates the entire responsibility for its own defense. But it soon proves to be much more than even its creator, Dr. Charles Forbin, dreamed was possible. After teaming up with its Russian counterpart, Guardian, it uses its power and vast resources of knowledge to assume control of the world.

This is where the second book takes up the story. Colossus ushers in a Golden Age, but exacting in payment human freedom. Forbin, the only person to communicate directly with Colossus, becomes the Director of human affairs, the most important man on earth. As such, he becomes the focal point of interest for two groups, the Fellowship, which vows to overthrow Colossus at any cost, and the Sect, which elevates Colossus to the Statute of God.

Colossus uses the Sect as a secret police to monitor the activities of the Fellowship and other anti-machine individuals. The Fellowship seems foredoomed to failure until one of its key members, Cleo Forbin, the Director's wife, is contacted by the Martians with a plan to destroy Colossus. Working secretly without her husband's knowledge, she is apprehended by one of Colossus's human agents. The mandatory death sentence for such activities is commuted to a term in a human research center, where Colossus experiments with people in an attempt to analyze the human emotion of love.

When Forbin learns of his wife's predicament, he pleads with Colossus to no avail to free her. He eventually goes over the brink and throws his lot in with the Fellowship. Even so, he feels like a Judas, betraying Colossus, who he has come to love. But Colossus has forced him to choose between it and Cleo, and so his mind becomes set against it. Using material provided by the Martians, he feeds Colossus a program posing a question which it must tackle but is incapable of answering. Only after it is too late and Colossus is deactivated, freeing the earth's defenses, does Forbin question the Martian's motives for aiding them. Their answer is soon forthcoming as the Martians beam the message - WE ARE COMING, thus paving the way for another sequel. I look forward to it. Jones handles seemingly cliché situations in highly imaginative ways.

What makes this work engrossing is the relationship which develops between Forbin and Colossus and how Jones plays the cold clinical nature of Colossus against the illogical and emotional scheming of the other characters in the book. He is masterful with his character delineations, and his analysis of how human emotion is shaped and altered under stress. But primarily it is the sheer entertainment value of the book which is its main virtue--the brisk pacing never allows the reader to lose interest. Recommended for light, enjoyable reading.

--William Fink

Total Eclipse by John Brunner (Doubleday Books, \$7.95?)

John Brunner has been spending the past few years writing the greatest disaster stories since the British wave of world-wide tragedy.

Never Came Down and Sheep Look Up are fantastic looks at what could go wrong in the coming years if one element of the environment goes wrong.

The current novel in question is again a disaster story, but one told from offstage. The tale centers around a group of researchers exploring Sigma Draconis, a star system in which the remains of a dead civilization have been found. The team of scientists are trying to find out why the aliens have become extinct while fighting to keep the project alive due to a paranoid Earth which fears that the project may in actuality be a secret military attempt to find alien weapons with which they will return to conquer the planet.

The strength in this novel is in the interplay between the scientists as they try to unravel the mysteries of the planet, each in their own way. The fact that the Earth finally does decide to abandon the men on the planet--or perhaps the Earth no longer exists to retrieve the men--is basically irrelevant to the novel. For some reason Mr. Brunner insists on having downbeat endings in his latest novels whether or not the situation calls for it. I would rate this one B+, highly entertaining but a bit annoying at the end.

--Steven L. Goldstein

((Here's a poem that just didn't quite become reality--except in the minds of the dreamer--ed.))

KOHOUTEK

Embracing cold yields briefly to the day.
The wayward lover hastens in his flight
To fiery consummation, then away
He flees forever to the waiting night.

A thousand eons pass. The wheel of stars
Turns slowly with the clockwork of the skies.
A memory moves within the frozen heart
And stirs the fire that never really dies.

--Chris Lampton

DEAR ALIEN



Art by Rich Adams

Dear Alien:

My planet is faced with an unheard of situation. As you might know, we are a race of sentient plants, so to speak. (We are only planted at night.) There were several mysterious deaths among our people in which the sap was drained out of them. We caught the culprit. The problem is that he is more than un-natural as a sap-sucker might seem to be. The penalty is death for murder here, and we can't kill him. We've tried almost everything. Now what?

Arboleus friskus

Dear Arboleus friskus: You'll have to drive a steak through his pith.

Dear Alien:

I have a problem which if you can't solve, I don't know where to turn. During my investigative work on Earth, I really make an effort to appear as human as possible. I was given a human male body, aged 25 or thereabouts, which outwardly could pass for any human. But when I am enjoying the physical frolicking with the native women, I fear the chance of discovery. My superiors left out a small but nonetheless important detail. They forgot to give me a navel.

All my female friends are quite shocked when they see my smooth tummy. What can I say to them? Do you know where I could get a belly button? Can you help?

Adam

Dear Adam: Black market navels are a bit scarce these times of year. Have you tried a red hot poker?

Dear Alien:

I've considered myself to be a normal homospacen for all of my years, but something has come up to make me question this assumption. Last week, while working in the kitchen, I cut off a finger with a sharp knife. Of course, I was terribly upset about the whole thing, but I had it taken care of at the hospital.

I awoke the following morning to find that not only did I have my finger back, but I had an extra one.

So far, I've experimented on my toes and ears, and already, in less than 24 hours, I have the beginnings of 4 extra toes and three ears.

So do you know what's causing this? I am deeply concerned over the matter.

Worried.

Dear Worried: You had better go see a dermatologist. You have the worst case of acne I have ever heard.

If you have any problems that you just cannot tell your nearest friends and relatives about, write Dear Alien in care of this galaxy.

NEXTISH

Our February (?) issue will be another theme issue. We will be featuring a special report on David F. Bischoff's favorite Ghod, HARLAN ELLISON. The issue will feature an article about Harlan, an exclusive interview with him, some new reviews of his new works--plus, of course, our usual features. I hope to see you then.



COUNTERTHRUST

COMING
SOON

THE
MAGAZINE
OF THE
FANTASTIC



G.A.